

Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Suzanne Wylde Senior Marine Advisor
Date:	12 th November 2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	LIC230025
Applicant:	Port of Waterford Company, 3 rd Floor Marine Point, Belview Port, Slieverue, Waterford		
Type(s) of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	1. <i>Dredging (including dredging involving the use of a device to remove any material, whether or not suspended in water, from one part of the seabed to another part of the seabed) other than –</i> (a) <i>dredging carried out to create a new harbour, berth or waterway, or to deepen existing facilities in order to allow access for larger ships, or</i> (b) <i>dredging ancillary to development authorised under the Act of 2000, whether or not it involves the removal of any material from the sea or seabed.</i> 6. <i>The deposit of any substance or object, either in the sea or on or under the seabed, from –</i> (a) <i>a vehicle, vessel (including a craft capable of travelling on, in or under water, whether or not self-propelled), boat, aircraft or marine structure (other than a pipeline),</i> (b) <i>a container floating in the sea, or</i> (c) <i>a structure on land constructed or adapted wholly or mainly for the purpose of depositing solids in the sea.</i>		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	The Middle Suir Estuary, Lower Suir Estuary, Barrow-Suir-Nore Estuary and Waterford Harbour for deposit at a designated dumpsite off Hook Head.		
Licence application received:	14 th March 2024		

1. Background

The Port of Waterford Company (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake maintenance dredging at Waterford port, and deposit of dredged material at a designated dumpsite off Hook Head falling under Schedule 7(1) & (6) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The activities are required to maintain the navigation channel.

The applicant holds an existing foreshore licence (FS006684) to undertake maintenance dredging, as well as a dumping at sea permit (S0012-03) from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Both of these authorisations expire on 31st December 2025.

2. Description of maritime usage(s) and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The applicant has applied for dredging to be undertaken in 16 areas within the Middle Suir Estuary, Lower Suir Estuary, Barrow-Suir-Nore Estuary and Waterford Harbour. These areas range from the upper end of the harbour in Waterford City right out to the seaward end of the harbour off Duncannon, Co. Wexford.

The proposed maintenance dredging in the navigation channel will primarily be undertaken using Trailer Suction Hopper Dredging (TSHD). Plough dredging is also proposed and is routinely used to maintain the navigation depths at Cheekpoint which is susceptible to sedimentation due to the nature of the currents in this area. The applicant also proposes to use mechanical dredging¹ to access areas such as quay walls and berths where material has been compressed and has consolidated making it difficult to remove using the other dredging methods proposed.

The applicant has requested a licence for 7 years, to run from 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2033. The applicant is proposing to deposit a maximum of 8,791,690 wet tonnes at the offshore dump site per annum and a maximum of 1,273,318 wet tonnes via plough dredger per annum.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The proposed maritime usage area for the dredging is located within the Waterford Estuary. The estuary is extremely complex and dynamic in its sediment movement and as a result sedimentation is highly variable within the estuary. Due to the nature of the tides within the estuary, sediments tend to accumulate in areas of the estuary with the lowest tidal velocity.

The benthic habitats present at the Port of Waterford, Little Island, Cheekpoint and Passage East tend to align closest with “Muddy estuarine community complex”. The substrate of this

¹ The method of mechanical dredging proposed in this instance involves a bucket being lowered to the seabed from one vessel and the material being dropped into a hopper on another vessel.

community is primarily fine material. The benthic community habitat around the Duncannon area of the estuary can be classified as fine sand.

The applicant also submitted a *Photographic Survey of a Dredge spoil disposal site in Waterford Harbour* as part of their licence application, dated September 2020. The survey noted the predominant sediment types at the disposal site was of fine sand. The sediment profiles analysed as part of the survey showed that silt-clay has been incorporated into the sand at the disposal site.

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European sites, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 1 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

The applicant submitted a *Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment* report as part of the licence application.

Table 1: Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests ²	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162]	Within MUL area	European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and Fraxinus excelsior (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	No	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

² Those Qualifying Interests marked in bold have been screened in for Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

		Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaité Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	Yes – possible habitat loss/degradation; possible disturbance from water quality impairment; possible disturbance from underwater noise		
Lower River Suir SAC [002137]	Within MUL area	Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0]	No	Yes	NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

		<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]			
		<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	Yes - possible underwater noise disturbance and disturbance from water quality impairment (suspended solids).		
Hook Head SAC [000764]	<5km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance and possible physical habitat disturbance/degradation	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Hook Head SAC 000764. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Saltee Islands SAC [000707]	20km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]	No Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance.	Yes	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Saltee Islands SAC 000707 and Saltee Islands SPA 004002. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Seas off Wexford SPA [004237]	Within MUL Area	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>) [A176] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Sandwich Tern (<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>) [A863] Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885]	Yes – possible above and underwater noise disturbance.	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Seas off Wexford SPA 004237. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Tramore Back Strand SPA [004027]	5-10km	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Tramore Back Strand SPA 004027. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service,

		Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Bannow Bay SPA [004033]	5-10km	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Bannow Bay SPA 004033. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Mid-Waterford Coast SPA [004193]	10-15km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Mid-Waterford Coast SPA 004193. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Keeragh Islands SPA [004118]	15-20km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Keeragh Islands SPA 004118. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Ballyteigue Burrow SPA [004020]	15-20km	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Ballyteigue Burrow SPA 004020. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Saltee Islands SPA [004002]	20-25km	Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]	No	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Saltee Islands SAC 000707 and Saltee Islands SPA 004002. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 2: Identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Disturbance from underwater noise.	Possible temporal impacts on marine mammals and birds.
Visual and above water noise disturbance.	Possible temporal impacts on birds.
Disturbance from water quality deterioration.	Possible habitat deterioration or habitat loss and temporal impacts on qualifying interests.

In-combination effects

MARA has developed a stepwise approach for identifying other plans and projects that may impact on European sites in-combination with the proposed maritime usage. Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are as follows:

1. Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)
2. Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)
3. Impact identification
4. Pathway identification
5. Prediction
6. Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination
7. Screening Stage Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion
8. Managing cumulative impacts - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process

The CESS has been defined as 10km and the CETS as 8 years. The definition of the CESS is based on the maximum extent of the sediment plume predicted to be generated as a result of the activities, in accordance with the *Port of Waterford: Dredge disposal, Numerical modelling of disposal plumes* (November 2023) as submitted with the licence application. The CETS is the proposed MUL duration.

A search of relevant databases undertaken on the 4th November 2025. Relevant projects within the CESS and the CETS were considered. Particular attention was given to the projects shown on Table 3 which have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 3: List of projects which, in particular, were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites insert names of projects that may be of particular relevance.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
S0012-05	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Waterford maintenance dredging.	Within the MUL area	Applied
HA93.303274	An Coimisiún Pleanála - Planning permission for River Suir Sustainable Transport Bridge.	Within the MUL area	Granted
OA10.323575	An Coimisiún Pleanála - Proposed extension to port facilities	Within the MUL area	Applied
FS006982	Foreshore licence. Energia Renewables ROI Ltd – site investigations.	<5km	Granted
LIC230013	Maritime Usage Licence Application. Port of Waterford – site investigations.	Within MUL area	Applied

The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also considered:

- Climate Action Plan 2025,
- Water Action Plan 2024,
- Port of Waterford Masterplan 2020-2044,
- Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 3 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

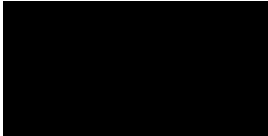
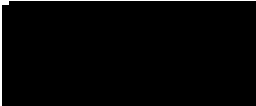
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

On the basis of the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature and scale of the proposed development;
- The distance to the nearest European sites;
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects;
- Possible disturbance from underwater noise;
- Possible visual and above water noise disturbance;
- Possible disturbance from water quality impairment;
- Possible habitat loss or degradation.

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by **Port of Waterford Company, 3rd Floor Marine Point, Belview Port, Slieverue, Waterford, X91 W0XW** to carry out **maintenance dredging and deposit in accordance with Schedule 7(1) & (6) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021** at locations in the Middle Suir Estuary, Lower Suir Estuary, Barrow-Suir-Nore Estuary and Waterford Harbour (LIC230025) will require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Suzanne Wylde Senior Marine Advisor	14 th November 2025
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data Unit	19 th November 2025